

Join the club

You don't have to be a golf expert to sell holidays in this lucrative sector, writes **Laura French**

If your weekends don't bear much resemblance to Rory McIlroy's and you're more likely to spend them watching Netflix than playing a round on the green, selling a golf holiday might seem a challenge. But it doesn't have to, according to some of the industry's leading experts.

Tim Worrell, product and sales manager for trade-only golf operator Tee the World, says: "Golf holidays really shouldn't be any different to booking a ski holiday or an adventure holiday, which agents book day in, day out."

It's also a pretty lucrative market. "A number of golfers will go on two or three breaks a year," says Charles Debruyne, golf director at Le Touquet Golf Resort. "They'll then tell their golf friends about the service provided by the travel agent, so it's perfect for referrals."

So how can you get in on this loyal, commission-boosting sector? Here's our step-by-step guide.

MARK YOUR CARD

First things first – get to know the product. "Take some time to learn what elements constitute a golf holiday, such as tee times, caddies, golf carts and handicaps," suggests Debruyne.

"If you want to show your versatility but don't have the 'golf knowledge' internally, team up with a dedicated golf tour operator. They will have the expertise and systems to deal with the enquiry."

Many specialist operators offer training on request, so it's worth enquiring to see what's available if you're looking to make golf a regular in your repertoire. And don't neglect obvious ways of learning about the sport – you might know a golfer or have a local golf club where you could pick up some basic tips.

ASK QUESTIONS

Once you've got the confidence you need to sell, it's time to work out what the client wants. "Ask ➤

DESTINATIONS

GOLF & SPORTS TOURISM | GOLF HOLIDAYS

ASK THE expert

"We're seeing more avid golfers enjoy a holiday in the winter months, heading to popular winter-sun destinations such as Gran Canaria. The Maspalomas Golf Resort is great for beginners, with its wide fairways and generous handicap limit of 34. For more experienced players, we recommend the Pestana Alto course in the Algarve, which plays host to the Portugal Masters. This course has a handicap limit of 24, meaning everyone teeing up is of a decent standard and there's a steady flow to the game. We'd recommend agents encourage customers to book a package to make it hassle-free – our golf holidays include specialist hotels and up to 22kg of golf carriage."

Craig Davidson,
general manager for trade
sales, Jet2holidays



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A Zafiro Hotels course, Spain; Arabella Golf Son Muntaner, Majorca; Pula Golf Resort, Majorca
PREVIOUS PAGE: The Teeth of the Dog hole at Casa de Campo, Dominican Republic

PICTURES: Oscar Quetglas; José Hernández



questions," says William Thomas, sales executive at Tee the World. "Do they want to be on a golf resort with multiple courses or do they want to be based in a town where they can travel around to different courses? Are the golfers taking their own clubs with them or would they prefer to hire them locally? Do they need golf buggies or are they happy to walk around?"

"It's also worth asking about their golf handicap, as most courses will want to know that the golfer has a basic understanding of the game," he adds.

WIDEN THE NET

Just as important as asking the right questions, of course, is knowing who to target. Don't limit it to a certain demographic, advises Sean Moriarty, chief executive of Quinta do Lago golf resort in the Algarve.

"One of the key myths is that golf holidays are only for groups of men over the age of 40," he says. "These days it's considerably more diverse, and we're seeing more women, couples, families and groups of younger people in their 20s and 30s."

APPEAL TO NON-GOLFERS

It's not all about the golf, of course. "It's important to appeal to everyone who will be travelling, not just the golfers," says Tobias Neumann, director of marketing at Majorca-based Zafiro Hotels.

"Highlight the other activities on offer in the destination. In Majorca, for example, we have a number

of cycling, running and walking routes. That makes it perfect for families, friends and couples who might be looking for an active break beyond just the golf."

Many golf resorts also offer comprehensive spa packages and other on-site activities. Tee the World points to the Amendoeira Golf Resort in the Algarve for tennis courts, football pitches and pools as well as a floodlit golf course for evening games.

Quinta do Lago, meanwhile, offers tennis, sailing, windsurfing, a jogging track and more alongside its three golf courses, while La Manga Club in Spain has everything from football and cricket to horse-riding and hiking, leaving no excuse for non-golfers to miss out.

HIGHLIGHT THE EASE

To really seal the deal, emphasise the ease of booking a golf package where everything is included, advises Le Touquet's Debruyne. "Sometimes there's a misconception among clients that booking a golf holiday will be complicated because there are so many elements to confirm, such as tee times, deposits, hotels and transport," he says.

"But this is where the travel agent earns their money. Tour operators can book the whole package and agents can help take away what might be perceived by the client as 'a lot of hassle'."

Get that right and you might just bag yourself a lifelong customer who'll come back again and again – and tell all their friends about it too. **TW**

BOOK IT

Tee the World offers five nights at the four-star Amendoeira Golf Resort, Portugal, from £995, including accommodation in a three-bedroom superior villa (based on six sharing) with daily breakfast, unlimited golf on two courses, buggies, flights and transfers. teetheworld.co.uk

Jet2holidays offers a week at the four-star, adult-only Viva Golf in Majorca from £579 per person, based on two sharing on a bed-and-breakfast basis, including a 22kg baggage allowance and return transfers, departing March 7, 2021. jet2holidays.com